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ABSTRACT

This paper recognizes that psychology, as a formal, organized discipline researched and taught in great institutions of learning since its inception in 1879, has been a Western enterprise, whose applications and generalizations to the behaviors of people from non-Western cultural communities seem to be questionable. There is a need for developing Asian psychology, the scientific study of behaviors of Asians that are informed by the cultures of Asia. The paper proposes that research, education, and publication of psychology in Asia be based on the Asian perspective and on the culture lived by these people. These research works should be published in Asian journals for communications with researchers of the Asian and non-Asian people, and more importantly, for application and education of psychology in Asia. These Asian journals do not only address the need of Asians but would also aim at widening the narrow empirical and epistemological basis of modern psychology. Contains 18 references. (BT)

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Psychological education, research and publication in Asia

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[1] The author is the editor of Asian Psychologist.

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I would like to begin my talk today by citing a young writer, Simon Tay, of Singapore. Paraphrasing the famous Trinidad writer, V. S. Naipaul, Tay (1997) wrote on his first visit to the U. S., that America is at once familiar and different to foreigners who come to visit. Everybody in the world, even the bushman in the African jungles and the freedom fighters in the remote mountains of Afghanistan, have heard, watched and read something about the United States. As psychologists, most of us are trained in the US. In the present context, I might add, learning American psychology, both as an academic discipline as well as remedies to the everyday unhappiness, big and small, from why Johnny couldn't learn to the neighborhood schizophrenic, who is prone to howling at the wind. We think what we have learned in the US can help us to find out why Xiaoming, a common name for a Singaporean Chinese boy, couldn't learn in Singaporean schools, and answers for Mdm, Teo whose grandson thinks he is possessed by the Monkey King of the great Ramayana classics. As Tay has put it, we seem to live in a make-belief world of America to the point of ignoring the traditions of Asia, to the customs we observe, the values we live by, and the codes of ethics, either under the name of Confucianism, Buddhism or Hinduism (Clammer, 1985). However, once encountering American people in real life, America appeared strange to Simon Tay, because in the real America, people live by rules, ethics and values (Hsu, 1981) that are different then those in Asia.

It has now been generally recognized that psychology, as a formal, organized discipline, researched and taught in great institutions of learning, since its inception of 1879 (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1990) has been a Western enterprise, whose applications and generalizations to the behaviors of people from non-Western cultural communities seem to be questionable. I

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[2] This paper is an extended version of the author's presentation at the 107th Annual Convention of the American

have come to this realization more acutely since I went to teach in Singapore, after years of schooling in the United States. By using North American measurements and comparing with North American norms, Asians come out strange, in such findings as Asians have lower self-esteem (Heine, Lehman, Markus, Kitayama, in press)[3], less optimistic (Chang, 1996)[4], but paradoxically are immune to depression (Chang, 1985). As a matter of fact, some international epidemiological data have shown that Asians have very lower rates of affective disorders in general. These somewhat conflicting and paradoxical findings make interpretations difficult. Enlightened authors have attributed these findings to cultural variables. Therefore, the have lower self-esteem because they are collectivists and hence have less of the sense of an individuated self. They have less depression because they have Confucianism. Etc. Without careful reading, these findings portray the Asians as strange and exotic human beings. From the North American perspective, they are "deviants" or one might put in a more neutral and value free expression: Asians are considered special cases, an alternative to the "mainstream" of North Americans. However, from a global perspective, it is hard to imagine that over two billion people are "exceptions" in the human race.

As a Chinese American, living and working in Singapore, while still maintaining family and professional ties in the United States, I have criss-crossed the Pacific more times than I care to remember. During these journeys, I am migrating from one social cultural reality to another, where people are subscribing to different meanings to interpret the same behaviors. These visits allowed me to cross two different intellectual worlds, where the basic paradigm or framework of

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Psychological Association August,Washington, DC.

[3] The author of these articles have argued that the cultural contexts of the Japanese (Heine, et al, in press), and the Asian Americans (Chang, E. C., 1996) have rendered the negative predictions of these constructs somewhat invalid.

meanings differ from each other. Therefore, the same behavior could used to convey different meanings, and be received differently in different meaningful worlds. It was in those sleepless nights as I was crossing the Pacific, in the crammed backseats in between screaming babies and weary grannies, I came to the realization that we, Asians should develop a psychology of our own, a psychology that will more validly, here, I mean ecological validity, describe, explain, and predict behaviors of Asians, and in the Asian context. There is a need of developing, through research, and publication, Asian psychology. By Asian psychology, I mean three overlapping domains of knowledge: psychology of Asians, psychology in the Asian world, and psychology by Asian researchers. I will elaborate further in the following:

Psychology of Asian People

By psychology of the Asian people, we mean the scientific study of behaviors of Asians that are informed by the cultures of Asia. Behaviors do not take place in a vacuum, they take place as intentional or unintentional actions by people who operationalize their motives, affects and cognitions through publicly agreed patterns of expressions. Behaviors have meanings. Psychology of Asian people would be a study of behaviors of Asian people as they are informed by the cultures of Asia. We should identify psychological constructs that are constructed within and via the Asian meaning systems. And manifested within the situations afforded in the Asian context. Here I mean that context shaped and conditioned by Asian beliefs and institutions, be it Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism and or Hinduism and Islam. More importantly,

[4] The author of these articles have argued that the cultural contexts of the Japanese (Heine, et al, in press), and the Asian Americans (Chang, E. C., 1996) have rendered the negative predictions of these constructs somewhat invalid.

here I also mean that context with facilitators and constraints afforded by the specific political and economical insitutions of contemporary Asia.

Using an Asian interpretive framework, the afore-mentioned findings about Asians would assume a new light: Asians are pragmatic and realistic, they hence have less optimistic outlook about life; they are realistic therefor have more conservative estimate about one's efficacy. Like any one else, Asians get anxious and depressed at times. Only their depression is expressed in idioms that use somatic metaphors (Chang, 1985), such as headache, fatigues, and losing appetite, as well as in interpersonal concerns (Koh, & Chang, 2000). They experienced the whole gamut of human emotions but expressed the symptoms differently from those stated in standard diagnostic manuals; more importantly, they do not normally go to a professional psychologist to complain about their emotional troubles (Lin, 2001). Those, who read Asian literature, and those who live the normal everyday life of the Asians, and those who have become confidants of Asian people, know that what I am stating here is true.

Psychology in Asia

Here by Asia, I mean the cultural or the meaningful world constituted by Asian values, norms and beliefs. Therefore, geographically, the world of Asia can incorporate the continent of Asia, as well as the large and small enclaves where people live their lives informed by these cultures and therefore constitute communities of Asian cultures, for instance, the Asian American communities in North America (Chao, 2001). Triandis (1989) reviewing social psychological publications in the 1980's found that more than 50% of the social psychological studies conducted in the Weat could not be replicated with the same results in Israel, and about 50% of the classical social psychological studies could not be replicated in Brazil. These are alarming figures. In the connection, I would like to point out that to majority of Asians, the cultures of

Israel and Brazil are considered "Western" or at least more Western than that of Japan or China. Against this background of non-reproducible Western studies in Asia, psychological students in Asia continue to learn about them in their Western produced textbook and attempt to replicate these studies in their newly developed psychological laboratories (Ho, 1990). Goaded by the dearth of information about psychology of Asians and the continued abuse of Western measures and misuse of Western findings in Asia, many Asian psychologists felt the need to develop a psychology of their own. In fact there are psychologists who felt that each Asian cultural community needs to develop its own indigenous psychology (Yang, 1994). However, I think between these Asian communities, there are some shared cultural characteristics that warrant a psychology of the Asians, in addition to the various Asian indigenous psychologies. There is a need to study how these contexts of Asia afford meanings to, and shape the expressions and perceptions of the behaviors and situations in the normal everyday life of the people, Asians, and otherwise, within these contexts.

The above-mentioned are what I consider contents of Asian psychology. In addition to the above, as editor of the Asian Psychologists, I encourage submissions of psychological research not necessarily involve Asian people or the cultures of Asia, but are conducted by psychologists who identify themselves as culturally Asian. It is very important here to distinguish between racially Asian from being culturally Asian (Chao, 2001). They overlap with , but are not identical to each other. Many second generation Asian Americans are racially Asian but not culturally Asian. What I am looking for, are research works that are somewhat influenced by the Asian perspectives, for instance, the study of independent as well as inter-dependent selves (Markus, & Kitayama, 1991). The interdependent perspective in social psychology reflects a salient emphasis of majority of the Asian cultures. While, selves in all human contexts are independent as well as

interdependent, people with Asian cultural background are more prone to take an interdependent view of interpersonal relationships than people of North American backgrounds.

What I am leading to is a proposition in the research; education and publication of psychology in Asia to be based on the Asian perspective and to be based on the culture lived by these people in their normal everyday life. Note here, I do not mean Asian by birth or by race, I mean an Asian perspective, that can be assumed by people of any race but with intimate knowledge of the cultures of Asia of which, Tony Marsella of Hawaii is an eminent example.

Psychological research inspired by non-Western traditions have made contributions to psychology as a human science, a scientific inquiry into human behaviors. As mentioned earlier, interdependence is a salient aspect of Asians. By paying attention to the interdependence in the self, and interpersonal behaviors, psychologists are also beginning to pay attention to the context and situational factors in explaining human behavior. A holistic view of the university with the individual as an integral part of it has been a worldview of many Asian cultures. Taking this view, one would seek to explain behaviors not only in the person but also in the context. This approach recalls Lewin's field approach to psychology (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, Nisbett, 1998). In the more recent issues of Journal of Personality of Social Psychology, I am seeing increasing numbers of articles addressing the issue of the context, and the situations in addition to the person. Taking a holistic issue of the heart and the mind, many researchers also address the issue of the interface between affect and cognition (Lutz, 1988). In other words, the cross-fertilization between Eastern and Western intellectual traditions is gradually taking place in contemporary psychology.

I also propose that we publish these research works in Asian journals for communications with researchers of the Asian and non-Asian people, and more importantly for application and

education of psychology in Asian. What do I mean by Asian journals? These journals are edited and published to address psychological issues of Asia. But they are aimed at international circulations, much as American journals are circulated internationally and are read by an international audience. These journals do not only address the need of Asians but would also aim at widening the narrow empirical and epistemological basis of modern psychology. In the latter regard, I am glad to find a kindred spirit in Bernard Wilpert, the past president of the International Association of the Applied Psychology. We have published an edited version of his 1998 presidential address delivered to the International Association of Applied Psychology in San Francisco. Wilpert (2000), looking toward the future of psychology, called for "broadening the epistemological basis of psychology" by including the "other" intellectual traditions, meaning the Eastern and African civilizations.

Some practitioners in the US seem to have caught on this movement toward other intellectual traditions: When I was on sabbatical at the University of California at Berkeley, every morning, I would walk pass not one or two but five or six institutions dedicated to alternative healing practices. However, it seems that this interest in the cultural traditions of Asia seem to have been ignored by the scientific community and the institutes in which psychologists are trained, with the exception of the APA-international division. As a result, a young Western trained Singapaorean counselor once advised young Singapaorean children to have "explosive confrontations" with their parents in order to resolve the parent-child conflict. I do not know how many Singaporean children have subsequently confronted their parents in explosive ways and produced what kinds of consequences. Chinese psychologist David Ho had, in one of his contributions to the APA Monitor, observed that the Hong Kong students he taught experienced a great chasm between what they learned in the university and the what they lived in their normal

everyday Chinese context (Ho, 1990). If what students learned in their formal training of psychology things that they cannot use to enhance their well being in their normal everyday context, studying psychology would remain an empty academic exercise. Therefore, cultural based research and publication is urgently needed if the profession of psychology is to survive and flourish in Asia.

I am glad that the American Psychological Association are aware of the need for research and publication of psychology from different traditions, and invited us, myself and this distinguished panel of psychologists to give a a forum to say what we hold so dear the continued development and flourishing of psychology as a human science and as a socially relevant profession.

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